The Fishing Pro's *Wife*

Cheryl Ellis shows off one of many Walleye caught using her preferred bait — worms.

There is something about a dew worm that drives walleye nuts. Perhaps it's the odor of a nightcrawler, or that gooey texture that does it. Maybe it's the snake like wriggle of a crawler on a hook. Whatever the reason, walleye respond favorably to night crawlers when just about nothing else will work. And sometimes when something else seems to be working better.

My wife Cheryl loves to use worms for walleye, and she regularly kicks my butt with them. A couple summers back, we were fishing north of Thunder Bay with our boys and leeches were hot. As we rigged up over a small reef, I handed her a fat leech to put on her jig. "I want to use a worm," she said without hesitation.

"But honey, leeches are the way to go," I said, gently providing my expert advice.

"Worm please," she replied. So I dug out the worms and handed her the liveliest one. She hooked it directly in the centre of her pink, fireball jig hook and dropped it down. We hadn't been fishing for very long when she had a sharp strike and set the hook. Cheryl's 6 foot jigging rod doubled over under the weight of what looked like a large walleye.

"This feels heavy," said my wife as the fish headed for deep water.

"Don't horse it," I coached, providing even more free advice. By this time, our two boys had sprung into action and were fighting over who would net the fish.

As the battle raged, Cheryl had somehow reeled the fish to the surface. It was a big one all right, and I quickly settled the net battle by grabbing it. "I think Daddy better land this one boys," I said as the fish dove back under the Pro V.

"I think its getting tired," said Cheryl, who was now standing up and applying direct pressure to the fish. Finally, the walleye tired and I put the mesh under it. There was much celebration as we admired the 7-pound walleye. After a couple of quick pics of the fish with my wife and boys, the big walleye went back in. "Leeches huh," said Cheryl, with a smile.

"So much for expert advice," I said, digging for a worm.

There are many ways to fish a night crawler properly,as it's almost impossible to wreck the appeal of a live worm. As was pointed out in the preceding anecdote, worms and jigs are a good fit. Nightcrawlers have a lot of inherent action and wriggle like the ultimate twister on a jig. A good way to rig a crawler on a jig is called split tailing. What you do is hook the crawler directly in the centre of the hook. This leaves two wriggling ends for the fish. If you want to slow the fall of the jig, add some air to the worm at each end with a worm blower. You can also thread half a worm onto the hook and this provides a nice minnowlike profile. If you want to bulk the jig up, thread a full crawler onto the hook several times and leave a little tail free at the end. There is no need to add a plastic body or tail to the jig as the worm does it all for you.

As good as a jig and worm is, few techniques use the appeal of a nightcrawler quite as effectively as the basic live bait rig or Lindy Rig. The simplicity of this presentation, and it's undetectable sliding sinker, are quite deadly when it comes to fishing a worm naturally. The basic rig is this: Take a piece of leader and tie a #4 or #6 baitholder hook to it. The average leader is about 16 inches but when the fishing gets really tough I'll go to 6 feet. Use a clear, tough line like Berkely Vanish for leaders.You'll also need a sliding sinker. I really like the Lindy No Snagg sinker as it does what it says and gets out of snags pretty regularly. Just make sure you give the sinker some slack when you get hung up. The sliding sinker goes on you main line then you add a small bead and then a barrel swivel. Tie your leader onto the other end of the barrel swivel and you're in business. This is the basic live baitrig. You can also use a floating jig head of corky near the hook to add some flash to the worm. Always hook the worm so that the hook point comes out through its nose. If you hook the worm in any other way, it will spin.

Gord Ellis proudly displays his catch!

While nightcrawlers work well as they are, inflating the worm really adds to its effectiveness. You inflate a worm by injecting air into its body with a hypodermic needle or worm blower kit. An inflated worm suspends nicely off the bottom, and is much more visible to walleye.

Don't over-inflate the worm though, or it will look like the Goodyear Blimp.

Night crawlers are a deadly walleye bait that deserve more attention from modern walleye anglers. If the fishing gets tough, reach for the dew worms and let them work that old fashioned magic. They've stood the test of time for a reason.

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Wilderness News

Planning your Canadian Fishing Adventure?

We have just completed a DVD that helps first-timers and repeat guests "Plan, Pack and Prosper." The video includes travel, tackle, equipment and clothing tips, along with check lists to make your trip lighter, and therefore easier to lug and clear customs. Call or e-mail to get a free copy.

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LAKE NIPIGON — THE SIXTH GREAT LAKE

It is a place of records: The largest body of fresh water within Ontario! (62 miles long and 43 miles wide) Home of the world's largest brook trout ever caught. (a whopping 14.5 pounder, 31.5 inches long and 18 inches around)

This typical Canadian Shield lake with its deep clear waters, numerous peninsulas and over 500 islands, yields large numbers of walleye, pike, lake trout, brook trout and whitefish. Some spots are 450 feet deep. Home to a variety of wildlife, including woodland caribou and bald eagles, it is perhaps the best kept secret in Canada. One look at an Ontario map, and you'll get the picture of its vastness…maybe its size is what holds people back?

"That is why we plan to take guests there and help them learn the water!" says Alan Cheeseman, owner and operator of Wilderness North. "We have the float-planes that make Lake Nipigon a fifteen minute flight from our base camp near Armstrong. We have the guides who know the water and the species, and we have access to private land others do NOT. In addition, we have invested in brand new 20 foot Lund boats with big water capability. The four-cycle 115 hp's make getting around this big lake easy and enjoyable. The additional rear mounted 8 hp's are ideal for trolling. Fast comfortable boats and quiet clean engines are a perfect set up to tame the big lake." Alan has plans to construct a lodge on the Mud River this fall with easy and direct access to Lake Nipigon, providing a variety of guest services in 2005.

"Many of our regular guests have asked: What is the next Great Canadian Adventure? …and this is it!" Alan adds. "We have the ability to create custom Lake Nipigon fishing adventures for a couple of days, or longer. In addition, we can accommodate kayakers and canoeists who may want to design an 'eco-adventure.' Each Wilderness North Nipigon trip is customized to the needs of guests. Some prefer that we provide all the boats, equipment, and guides …others request just our fly in service and a few provisions."

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Map of Lake Nipigon and surrounding area.

Another spectacular Canadian sunrise!

Cover Story continued

LAKE NIPIGON THE SIXTH GREAT LAKE

For fisherman the phrase
"Big Lake Big Fish"
is a fact.

Thirty Pound - 50 Inch Northern Pike? You bet! Noted guide Gord Ellis has rated Lake Nipigon as one of the top ten lakes in Canada and asks, "Are you willing to put in the time to catch a lunker? Then get to Lake Nipigon, I believe this is the place. Its trout water — cold and deep — but there are weedy, shallow areas, as well. Those near deep water hold giant pike. The best bays are South, Chief, Orient, and McIntrye. Good pike are also found around Shakespeare and Kelvin Islands and along the west shore (West Bay, however, is closed to all angling)." There is limited access to Lake Nipigon, but Wilderness North's fly in access to Mud River opens up this lake in minutes. This is unique fishing and timing is key.
Ellis says: "Big pike hang around shallow bays in June and early July, but they're spooky and tough to catch. Cast large bucktails or jerkbaits to weedbeds from mid-August to mid-September, when the largest pike come shallow and feed. The monsters hang around the deep edges of rocky reefs and in backbays that have cabbage beds. Some spots are less than 50 feet (15 m) square, yet I've taken 30-pound pike off such tiny weedbeds and have had larger fish follow."

Monstrous Brook Trout

Monstrous brook trout make this lake famous. The world record brook trout was caught in 1916. Even today, brookies in the 4-7 lb range are quite common. Lake Nipigon's brookies mainly feed on brown sculpins, tiny bait fish that flee and dart beneath boulders. The normal method of angling is casting small spoons or body baits along shorelines and

Wilderness North base on Waweig Lake.

The open waters of Lake Nipigon.

near river mouths. If a fly rod is your choice… bring it along and hang on! The locals call these Brook Trout "coasters"… they are in abundance and they are delicious.

Giant Lake Trout

The best lake trout fishing occurs during June, July, and August. Lake Nipigon has a two lake trout per day limit. Only one fish can be greater than 27 1/2 inches in length. Nipigon Lakers are huge, 20 lb fish are common with lunkers reported in the 55 lb range. Nipigon Lakers relate to structure usually caught near reefs, humps, banks, island points, drop-offs, feeding shelves and flats. Some of the best lures are the Williams Warbler, Williams Quick Silver and the Bechhold Flasher. Trolling with downriggers in 65 feet of water or more is the normal method of angling for these monsters of the north.

Anglers will also find a large variety of other fish including walleye, rainbow trout, coho, chinook, pink salmon, whitefish and perch. Special regulations do apply to these waters, so check before you fish.

Ontario's MNR (Ministry of Natural Resources) has recently drafted regulations that will preserve this one of a kind place for generations to come. "Balancing the protection and sustainable use of the resources of this vast and unique area will contribute to a healthy, natural environment and strong, stable communities," said Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay. The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy is the outcome of more than three years of public consultation. The strategy was developed with input from local and provincial interest groups, meetings with First Nations, the Lake Nipigon Watershed Advisory Committee and three rounds of open houses in four local communities. For more information call the Ministry of Natural Resources at 807-887-5000.

Alan Cheeseman commented: "We are in full support of these regulations and have the operational skills to introduce Lake Nipigon to our guests, while making sure they are in full compliance with the law."

Call us — we can tell you more, as well as carefully plan and outfit your first trip to Ontario's other Great Lake! We're ready when you are.

RECIPE

Cajun Ranch Pike Sandwiches

2 northern pike
(eight-pound fishes)
2 pounds unsalted butter
20 cloves minced garlic
Cajun seafood seasoning
Ranch dressing
Romaine lettuce
2 Large sliced tomatoes
6 Large sesame-seed buns

Wilderness North guests claim this is the best sandwich ever. Heat a black, cast-iron skillet. This must be done outside. If done indoors, the kitchen must be equipped with a commercial-grade vent system, otherwise, due to considerable smoke, smoke alarms will sound! Use either a propane gas stove or a gas grill with the cooking rack removed and pan placed directly on top of the cooking element. Heat the black pan until it turns greyish-white. On a gas grill this takes about 45 minutes.

Cut each filet into three equal pieces. Combine one full pound of unsalted butter with the garlic and melt in a separate pan. Sprinkle cajun seafood seasoning generously over the fish. Press seasoning into the fish with a spoon. Turn over the filets and repeat on the second side. Prepare cajun ranch dressing by adding cajun seasoning to taste. When the pan is grey-white hot, dip the filets into the butter-garlic mix and then into the hot pan. Allow one minute of cooking per side. Remove from the pan. The filets should appear blackened on the surface while moist and delicious on the inside. Place filet on bun and top with dressing, lettuce and tomato.

The Guided Trip

EVERY FIRST TIME VISITOR to Wilderness North has two distinct thoughts.

ONE: I love the remoteness, the clear air and water, the serene beauty!

TWO: Where do I start?

For many the answer to this question comes from a select group of guides who know how to fish and where to fish. And they're ready to share this knowledge with you.

All of our guides have extensive knowledge of fishing techniques and tackle plus many years of experience landing fish for themselves as well as showing other the joys of sport fishing. Many of our guides are local residents of native Ojibway decent who possess an in-depth knowledge of the area's lakes and woods. While up to date on the latest modern equipment, they attempt to connect to the land in a traditional First Nation way as part of the interdependent web of nature. In their friendly way, they share the respect they have for the environment while helping Wilderness North guests have success on the water.

Our guides will teach you their precise live fish handling techniques, and will even help you prepare those very popular shore lunches. Guides welcome you on board and operate our larger faster boats. (16 foot 25 HP Electric start) They offer advice on tackle selection, lure choice and presentation. A day on the water is also filled with their rich stories of the area and its history plus years of fishing and hunting adventures. While guides cannot control the weather, and the moods of the Walleyes or Northern Pike, they can provide a great day on the water, with the goal of helping you find success on your own.

One of our guests commented, "It was like learning and catching all rolled into one. I became a better fisherman based on what they taught me and I gained a lot more respect for the area, its ecosystems and its First Nation people."

Many of you have had the pleasure of meeting Gordon "Butch" Campbell *(pictured above)* and discovered his considerable knowledge and his unassuming way of sharing it with everyone in the boat. His good nature, and sense of humor add to the experience as well. As Wilderness North's Director of Guide Services, Butch commented, "I look forward to building an exceptional team of talented guides ready to enhance our guest's Canadian fishing and wilderness experience."

When you book your next trip, ask about our guide service — just one more way we make your Wilderness North experience a one of kind outdoor adventure.

Butch expertly fillets a fresh caught Walleye.

Fisherman Robert Ducker and guide Butch Campbell, catch, photograph, and release another nice Northern on Whitewater Lake.

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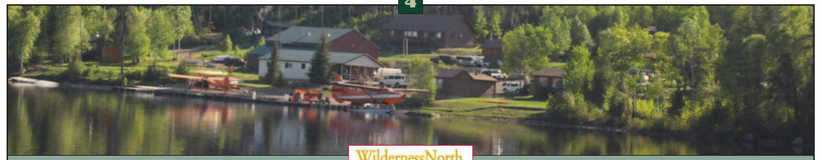

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Paul Gilling poses for a trophy shot before setting this big fish free.

You're a Rock Star!

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Tackle Talk!

From time to time we come across an article that we think can help our fisherman have more success while they're in Canada. We're happy to share these articles with you. Perhaps you have some to share with us.

For example, if you're interested in receiving "10 Classic Lures — 764 Years of Experience in your Tackle Box" *(no David Letterman did not write the article)*, just drop me an e-mail or call to request your copy.

Remember: "Smarter fishermen turn fishing into catching."

By the way, the fish I'm holding in the photo was caught on lure #3 of the Top Ten.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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